

Magonia54

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Interpreting Contemporary Vision and Belief

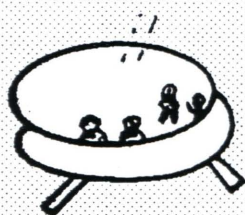


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Holy Violence

masochism, theophany, idolatry and the myth of
the crashed flying saucer

Peter Brooksmith



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Peter Rogerson's

**northern
echoes**

Abduction Updates

WE CAN now tie up a few loose ends on a couple of the early abduction cases.

Firstly, Antonio Villas-Boas. Thanks to Luis Gonzalez, who supplied me with photocopies, I can confirm that the *SBEDV Bulletin* of April-July 1962, which published the AVB case was written in English (after a fashion!). It was the export and exchange magazine for the Brazilian group, so it was clear that a number of English-speaking ufologists must have known about the case before its appearance in *Flying Saucer Review*.

In fact the earliest fragmentary mention of AVB can be traced to *UFO Critical Bulletin* of January-February 1959, which reported (according to SBVED, January 1973) "a woman, but not monstrous, and a peasant had sexual intercourse aboard a flying saucer". *UFO Critical Bulletin* was jointly edited by J. Escobar Faria of Brazil, and Richard Hall, Donald Keyhoe's sidekick in NICAP. It was a cautious journal, sceptical of contactees, so if so cautious a source referred to AVB there is a reasonable possibility that fuller versions of the tale had appeared in less restrained sheets prior to 1962. Indeed, in the 1950's volume of Jerome Clark's *UFO Encyclopaedia*, he mentions that APRO's version of the case was starting to leak out in the early sixties.

MUCH MORE significant has been the calculation by Mike White back in *Magonia* 48 that the stimulus behind the 'Rocky Mountain High' case of April 1964 (see 'Fairylane's Hunters' part 2, *Magonia* 47) was Venus. I had been withholding any further comment until I was able to get Mike to recheck his astronomical data with the time and exact location of the case. He has now done this, and Venus fits. What this means is that a misperception of a planet can generate a very complex series of experiences and beliefs, even in the absence of massive cultural impact. The imagery in this case cannot have come from ufology; it must have come from popular culture (films, comics, etc.), folklore and experiences generated within the brain.

This shows that IFO's can generate an Enchantment (the 'Oz Factor') and, furthermore, that some notions of abductions, UFO linked poltergeist effects and animal reactions were already present in public imagination well before the mass publicity of the current abduction stories. Dare I suggest, yet again, that traditional fairy and supernatural lore may have been the template onto which such stories were built.

All this simply reinforces what we should have learned from Allan Hendry's *UFO Handbook* fifteen years ago, but what too many ufologists have been trying their damndest to forget ever since: astronomical IFO's are capable of generating awesome, emotionally stirring fantasies, much more so than many other superficially more spectacular stimuli such as advertising planes. Does this relate to the speculation of the late Dr Stephen Black that the flicker-effect of bright stars and planets seen in some atmospheric conditions may have generated altered states of consciousness in some people? I could also point out that like 90% of Hendry's cases, Mike White was able to solve this case from a library chair. If 90% of cases can be solved by consulting an ephemeris or by a few phone calls to airports of met. offices, then with intense field investigation the overwhelming majority of the remaining 10% would be solved.

MEANWHILE HERE is another forgotten abduction story. The narrator is a pilot: "I had walked away... and could still see [my plane], when a terrific sensation overtook my senses, as if my body had been suddenly pushed into the deep freeze compartment of a refrigerator.

"I could not move a muscle but noticed that a beam of light started encircling me, and then this beam revealed... a metallic object above me, the size of which I was unable to determine. The beam was guiding me towards something the sight of which made me feel like screaming for my comrades... but... like in a nightmare I

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 >>

Communion cups and crashed saucers

UFO lore, theophany, idolatry, masochism and the myth of the crashed flying saucer

Part One

HOLY violence

PETER BROOKESMITH

This series is an elaboration of a paper given at the Fortean Times Unconvention at the University of London Union, 22-23 April 1995

"All religions are at the deepest level systems of cruelties" - Friederich Nietzsche

NO DOUBT to the amazement of many, this series does not exercise great sarcasms - well, not very great ones - against the claims of any UFO percipient, abductee, expert, crank, skeptic, or anyone else involved in the UFO syndrome. For the sake of my argument I have to treat all of them as if they're telling the truth. Because, dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to join these two in matrimony: the mystery of ufology, pregnant as that is with the strange bounty of the crashed saucers, and the mystery of God.

Of course, there's nothing new in hooking flying saucers to the shirt tails of the Lord. We all know the usual suspects, but there are details of their claims and beliefs of which it's worth being reminded.

Probably the best-known, certainly the longest-lived, sect to have discovered religion in UFOs is the Aetherius Society. This cult was founded by a London taxi-driver, George King, in 1955, as the result of an experience that would have had most people fleeing to the nearest out-patients' department. In May 1954, King says, he was alone in his flat in Maida Vale, London, when he heard a voice confide: 'Prepare yourself! You are to become the voice of Interplanetary Parliament.'

King took this news remarkably equably. Soon after, he was making telepathic contact with a being from Venus called Aetherius. King learned, among other things, that Jesus of Nazareth too was alive and well and living on Venus - enjoying a warmer climate than Israel's.

Plainly, King would quite like to be another Messiah, and regales us with tales calculated to prove him worthy of the office. On one out-of-the-body trip to Mars, he found that a sentient asteroid 'the size of the British Isles' was attacking the Martian space fleet. When the Martians' own military efforts failed, King himself - who else - led a final 'death or glory' assault that defeated the object with what he called 'a weapon of love'. King now resides in Los Angeles - which also enjoys a warm climate.

Some prefer to see UFOs and ufonauts not as divine at all, but demonic; agents of Satan and possibly worse. We are told by John White, for example, in FSR (Summer 1992) that 'America is at the leading edge of a

millennial demonic invasion [of ufonauts] directed by the Prince of Darkness', along with much more to the same effect. The editor of FSR seems to believe this kind of thing himself; he is known to have identified UFOs with djinns, whom he describes, not entirely accurately, as evil spirits in Moslem folk belief.●1

Not that 'real' ufologists are always entirely pure in their perception of these things. I doubt I shall soon forget the occasion in a Chicago bar some years ago, when that well-respected MUFON commentator and self-proclaimed 'scientific' UFO investigator James McCampbell solemnly informed me, and a scarcely less startled Alvin Lawson, that the real head of the US space mission was himself an alien, and that the program of alien-human co-operation was linked to the international Jewish banking conspiracy.●2

And of course there's Eric von Daniken, still the most egregious promoter of the so-called Ancient Astronaut hypothesis. According to this, spacemen came to Earth around 5,750 years ago, had their wicked way with the natives' comely daughters (as might be expected, after all that time cooped up in a spaceship) and lo! between them they generated humanity. Ever since, we have thought of those visitors as gods. More than 3000 years later, according to this thesis, people were still being fooled. Ezekiel thought he had a vision of God. Wrong. He saw a spaceship, which resembled something like four helicopters squidged together. Meanwhile, the ancient Egyptians, who were plainly too stupid to work out for themselves how to put one brick on top of another without making a right shambles of it, had had to have a little ET assistance with their program of civic architecture; and so the 'argument' goes on.

Of the more interesting variants on this theme, in which the aliens were at least someone else's gods, was Robert Temple's attempt to show that amphibious extra-terrestrials had once visited the Dogon tribe of Mali from the Sirius star system, and Robert Thompson's bid to prove that Vedic mythology 'proves' the reality of modern UFO experiences (and vice versa).

●3

1■ The Arabic, I am told, is muharram, which translates roughly as 'those who do bad', which is not the same as doing evil (maskhut). Djinns inhabit liminal zones such as cracks in walls, plugholes in sinks, doorways, windows, and similar places and, intriguingly, they enjoy music [which puts me in mind of a remark by Suzanne Langer somewhere in *Philosophy In A New Key* to the effect that music is symbolism 'in a vegetable state', i.e. on the brink of being a symbolic language; while the associations of music and Other-worlds and other-worldly states, to which music may transport you, are legion - a fundamental theme in the musical criticism of Wilfrid Mellers]. Djinns require propitiation, particularly before eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, washing, &c., but are not intrinsically evil. One wonders if they are not literally superstitions of the pre-Islamic animist religion in Arabia, occupying a place in the psyche rather like that held by the Tuatha De Danaan in Ireland.

2■ If this conspiracy exists, it strikes me as strange that Israeli Kfir jets have so far omitted to nuke the crap out of Brussels and remove the EU and all its monstrous

bureaucratic works, that so inhibit free trade and economic liberty, from the face of the Earth. Business is business, after all.

3■ Robert K.G. Temple, *The Sirius Mystery*, Sidgwick & Jackson 1976; Richard L. Thompson, *Alien Identities*, Govardhan Hill 1994.

4■ See, for example, the analysis of New Testament texts in Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*, Free Press (New York) 1992. Maccoby uses the contradictions in the various accounts of Judas as clues to both what is original, perhaps historical material, and what has been inserted to conform with politico-theological requirements of the Pauline church. See pages 137 and 181 for concise explanations of the tendenz method.



5■ John Whitmore, 'Religious Dimensions of the UFO Abduction Experience', in James R. Lewis (ed.), *The Gods Have Landed*, SUNY 1995, p80. Essays by the other scholars just mentioned are also in this highly recommended book.

6■ R.C. Zaehner, *Our Savage God*, Collins 1974, page 77.

7■ Ibidem. My italics.

8■ Epistle of Paul to the Romans 12:19, an adaptation of Deuteronomy 32:35.

9■ See Ed Sanders, *The Family*, E.P. Dutton (New York) 1971, pages 128-9. [This is the unexpurgated first edition, with reference to *The Process* unexcised.] Manson believed he had actually overcome death by submitting to it and surviving.

10■ Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, tr. M. Friedlander, Routledge & Kegan Paul, N.D. US reprint of the 1904 (second, revised) edition, pages 81, 83.

Puddings and Proofs

The underlying thesis of both the UFO religious cults and the ancient-astronaut crowd is that what we call gods or their hellish counterparts are really aliens. It's no dafter than many another idea doing the rounds about aliens and UFOs. And the ancient-astronaut claim has a refreshingly ingenious core of emotional truth to it. To which I'll return: for now, we might note two things about the existence of UFO religious cults.

First, that such cults exist at all demonstrates the rich potential of the UFO syndrome to adapt itself to religious purposes, and what can be made of ufological raw material if you have sufficient need. Indeed the ease with which the religions emerge from the material suggest that the belief systems are only efflorescences of what lies at the roots of the UFO syndrome, however extravagant and insistent its protestations of secularism and scientific endeavor.

Second, an impartial observer can hardly avoid noticing that the UFO syndrome amounts to a mass of self-contradictions, paradoxical claims, faulty logic and absurdities. For example: aliens are conventionally reckoned to be thousands, perhaps millions of years 'more advanced' than we are, both morally and technologically. But they utter banalities or dreamlike nonsense (*'La veritee est refusee aux constipés'* and *'Ce que vous*

Blake's rendering of God afflicting Job. God is identified with Evil by way of the serpent that rides him, and his intriguingly cloven hoofs.

appelez cancer vient des dents' were two of Charles Bowen's favorites) when they turn up to share their insights with us. And their craft, if Len Stringfield was on to anything at all, persist in breaking down and crashing. The abduction syndrome displays similar contradictions: 'grays' can float their victims through solid walls, yet seem to know nothing of even the rudiments of DNA. These contradictions, like those noted in scriptural texts by the tendenz school of scholarship,●4 are the vocally-challenged nocturnal canines of ufology. They silently beg us to ask if they are the product less of the evidence per se (such as that is) than of mythic and emotional necessity.

For some years, a number of scholars, such as George Eberhart, Gordon Melton, John Saliba, John Whitmore and others have been pointing to this greater truth: that the UFO syndrome as a whole - not just the cults - and in any of its aspects, is essentially religious in nature. This assessment encompasses not just witnesses, but ufologists too, who act as 'theologians' of the saucerian religious impulse:

Things which do not fit into the definitions of the familiar humanity tends to sacralize. ...Researchers [into abductions] who devise interpretive scenarios tend to encounter religion whether they mean to or not, and even resort to theologizing about alternate realities and the final goal of human history.

●5

It seems that this thesis is not well-known inside main-

stream ufology, let alone much heeded. There are honorable exceptions to this rule among ufologists as a whole: such as Hilary Evans, Paul Devereux, Bertrand Meheust, and several of the writers associated with Magonia, who have drawn parallels between the two kinds of experience. But their relevant work is rarely cited in mainstream UFO writing - no doubt for reasons that are easy enough to conjure. By way of explanation it may be simpler to think of all those labeled as 'skeptical' of the more far-fetched ufological beliefs (among them the ETH) as being deemed heretics. This would at least help to explain the rage with which their effusions are often immediately greeted and the unflinching indifference with which they are treated thereafter. Be that as it may: none of the analysts cited has, as far as I know, really examined what kinds of gods inform the UFO syndrome, or how their images and associations resonate through the accounts of so-called aliens and their kit. Let alone those bits of kit that so embarrassingly crash here and there.

So I am going to begin - at last - at the beginning; and thus the three parts of this series will:

- First, give you a guided tour of God
- Second, show some of the parallels between perceptions of that God and perceptions of UFOs and aliens, and
- Finally, propose how crashed saucers may fit into the religious outlook that underpins the UFO syndrome.

Which Gods?

The world has many gods, not all of them compatible with one another. And only some of them, it seems, are compatible with the UFO phenomenon.

But the UFO phenomenon derives, and is largely driven, from the United States - 'one nation under God', and that God is Semitic. If we take the Tanach, the Hebrew Bible, on its own terms, Professor R.C. Zaehner was right to say that 'it is unmistakably the history of God's self-revelation to man.'●6 This is crucial to understanding how UFOs and aliens are related to motifs in the Semitic religions - that is, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and their variants and offshoots.

Long ago in Asia Minor, a stiff-necked tribe of herdsmen had the terrible experience of being chosen by God and in consequence thereafter of having to listen to his every word, as he revealed himself, over thousands of earthly years, to them. God spoke directly to Adam, to Noah, to Abram, to Moses, to the prophets Elisha and Elijah and Ezekiel and Isaiah, and to his faithful and bemused servant Job. The Lord seems to have spoken only occasionally to Jesus the Nazarene: the texts are ambiguous - but as the man is taken by his followers to be the Word made Flesh, this scarcely matters. God spoke through a vision of Jesus of Nazareth to Saul of Tarsus and appeared as himself, directly, to Mohamed.

He was a little more oblique with Joseph Smith in upper New York, but the principle is essentially the same. However, Smith is part of a specifically American dimension in this revelatory tradition, and to that I shall return. Understanding certain apparently fundamental and peculiarly American religious constructs is central to establishing a true picture of how the UFO syndrome is also a religious one.

East of Eden

There is nothing like this self-revelation of the divine in Hindu, Buddhist, Chinese or ancient Greek religion. The Eastern sages, some of whom uncannily but probably coincidentally have much in common with their pre-Socratic contemporaries such as Heraclitus and Parmenides in pagan Greece, seek to discover God for themselves. They exemplify 'man's reverent search for a true, because consistent, picture of the Divine.'⁷ Certainly there is not much that is consistent about the Semitic God as revealed in the canonical texts, let alone in what the Christian apocryphal writings disclose. If the thousand years of rabbinic tradition that culminated in the Talmud created a coherence and symmetry in its own apprehension of God, these were achieved more through argument and the sages' own humanity than through direct revelation.

The One God, Adonai, is by self-proclamation a moral God. The singular gift of the Jews to the world is ethical monotheism. In Semitic religions the human individual is always under the judgmental eye of God, who has proclaimed his commandments and does not always deem humanity capable of determining where true justice lies. Its apportionment may have to wait for another dispensation altogether: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.'⁸

In contrast, at the heart of the great Eastern religions is a longing to join God in the here and now, and so to obliterate the self: to be subsumed into the One, beyond good, beyond evil. The Eastern tradition might be called basically self-, not God-, centered, for it implicitly declares that you can become God. In Islam, that is blasphemy: it cost Hallaj, the great poet of Sufism, his life. There is some evidence that Charles Manson believed he had directly acquired divine attributes in a perverse Californian mutation of satori, and was thus, in his own estimation, above being concerned with matters of life and death, and outside the moral constraints of ordinary mortals.⁹

That fusion with the Absolute in Eastern mysticism 'scrambles time and seasons' into an eternal Now. In the Semitic traditions eternity, along with absolute justice, is in the first place experienced post-mortem, and then as an endless prolongation of time, with which God may be said to co-exist. The mystical strands in Semitic religions do not negate this generalization. Mystical experiences there put the 'witness' into the presence of God, providing glimpses of, but not identity with, the godhead, and in the process admit distortions of the infinite succession of days that is time.

To parody Prof. Zaehner: 'If we take the UFO syndrome on its own terms, it is unmistakably the history of the aliens' self-revelation to Man.' And be it noted that both distant and close encounters may often involve a disruption in the witnesses' perception of time, and that it is an integral part of the UFO mythos that the aliens are watching us - watching over us, according to the contactees. At very least they are presumed to be observing us, if only as anthropologists, and perhaps with more sinister intent, as Donald Keyhoe was convinced.

The Attributes of God

Otherness

God may reveal himself to man, but he remains fundamentally unknown and unknowable, by his own admission - perhaps even by preference.

THE UFO SYNDROME

Ufology can be called a syndrome because: first, it is just that, a running together [Greek: sun, together + dramein, to run] of alleged incidents and their consequences in an identifiable pattern; and second, because we know about the vast majority of UFO events from second-hand reports made by ufologists, not directly from witnesses.

Generally, what we get by the time an event reaches the public domain is an alleged experience that has been mediated by investigators, who are also the reporters of the alleged events, and who (as you well know) display varying degrees of expertise, objectivity, honesty, gullibility and crankiness. So there is a running together of 'witness' and investigator-cum-reporter that makes most UFO and abduction stories, in fact, a collaborative effort. And of course reporters and investigators are well versed in the literature - as indeed are many witnesses, before they make, or have drawn out of them through questioning or hypnosis, their own claims. All of this story-making is subject at each stage to a narrator's belief system.

There is a third level of syndrome, in that there is a community, albeit loose and scattered, of parties all interested in different ways in these claims - and they collaborate too, in that they report, read and comment upon one another's productions. I suspect that these different levels or layers of communication and collaboration (and I don't mean conspiracy!) have all interacted and contributed to the shape and indeed many details of the UFO-related narratives we all know so well. For example, the 'hybrid breeding program' so beloved of Hopkins, Jacobs and Mack - sounds like an advertising agency - was prefigured in von Daniken's books and before them in those of Lethbridge, Pauwels and Bergier, among others.

Thus by the 'UFO syndrome' I mean the whole complex web of claims, reports (tales), reflections, qualifications and beliefs that joins witnesses, investigators and commentators.

'Thou canst not see my face,' he told Moses in the tabernacle at Mt Hebron. Twenty five centuries or so later, Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), the founder of Jewish philosophy, said that 'there is no possibility of obtaining a knowledge of the true essence of God'.¹⁰ Thus, no one can describe God, except by saying what he is not. For example, in his *Moreh Nebuchim* (Guide for the Perplexed) Maimonides says:

there is no relation between God and time or space. For time is an accident connected with motion ...and is expressed by number...; and since motion is one of the conditions to which only material bodies are subject, and God is immaterial, there can be no relation between him and time. Similarly there is no relation between him and space. ...as God has absolute existence, while all other creatures have only possible existence, as we shall show, there consequently cannot be any correlation [between God and his creatures].¹¹

Make no mistake. The Semitic God is absolutely Other: indivisible, invisible, indescribable, inscrutable, and incomprehensible. As Donald Crowhurst, in his madness, put it: 'Nature allowed God only one sin - that of concealment.'

Omnipotence and evil

We are constantly assured by religionists of all persuasions of the love, bounty and mercy of God. This is hardly a complete picture. The over-riding philosophical problem in ethical monotheism has ever been the existence of evil in the light of God's alleged justice and compassion. As was inevitable, in the light of his role as Creator.

If God made the Universe, and is omnipotent and omniscient, and the fount of loving-kindness, 'the merciful, the compassionate', the Just God, how do we account for the existence of evil, human or transcendent, as personified by Satan? Laying evil at the feet of Man, as a product of an abuse of free will (a Catholic theodicy),¹² is fudging the issue. Since God made Man and knows him inside out, evil becomes inevitable. Christianity and Islam both attempt to block this gap by

¹¹ Op. cit., page 71. Translator's parenthesis. Might Einstein have seen this passage?

¹² There is an excellent exposition of this doctrine by a character in Anthony Burgess's novel *Earthly Powers* (Hutchinson 1980); see Chapter 27.

13■ Job 2:10.
 14■ C.G. Jung, Answer to Job, RKP 1954, pages 3-4.
 15■ Herman Tennesen, 'A Masterpiece of Existential Blasphemy', The Human World No 13 (November 1973), pages 1-8.
 16■ R.C. Zaehner, op. cit., pages 225-6. See Isaiah 1:13-14, and Amos 5:21.
 17■ Exodus 33:19.

dabbling a foot into the Gnostic camp and elevating Satan to almost divine omnipotence - although lacking the creative or compassionate aspects of God himself.

But look at the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Koran with a steady eye, and it is plain enough. An aspect of God is evil itself. Evil is a product of God's omnipotence, which includes his place as universal Creator.

The Revelation of Job

The quintessential confrontation with this problem is the Book of Job. God is unruly enough to take a bet with Satan (who is not the same figure as the Christian or Moslem Satan) on the steadfastness of Job's faith. Job,

pure, naked, foam-flecked power. In Jung's words, he is 'eaten up with rage and jealousy', 'amoral', 'the unvarnished spectacle of divine savagery and ruthlessness'.¹⁴

Professor Herman Tennesen¹⁵ puts it still more bluntly: God is condemned out of his own mouth as 'a ruler of grotesque primitivity, a cosmic cave dweller, a braggart and a rumble-dumble, almost congenial in his complete ignorance [of] spiritual refinement'. Job's moral protests against his afflictions finally provoke the appearance of the Lord himself who, in Chapters 39 and 40, spurns Job's own incorruptible faith in justice with an astonishingly expressed catalogue of his own terrible capacities. God's sense of the glory of his own might obliterates ethical considerations.

Job's repentance, Tennesen feels, is uttered 'in the placative manner one would employ... to address a mentally deranged person.' As God may be, but at the end of the story he is still in charge - in control. He even chastises Job's 'comforters' for deploying virtually the same arguments as he has himself adduced on his own behalf. 'But this,' says Tennesen, 'is only a cause for puzzlement as long as we cling to certain notions about divine justice and logic. After the Lord has introduced himself, nothing amazes us any more.'

Tennesen pertinently asks: 'Is the whole of [Job] any more than a poetic game with an alien and outdated concept of the divine? Do we know this god?' - and answers:

Yes, we know him from the history of religion; he is the god of the Old Testament, 'the Lord of Hosts' or, as we might put it, the Lord of the Armies: the jealous Jehovah. ... he also lords it over our own experience, today as many millennia ago. He represents a familiar biological and social milieu: The blind forces of nature, completely indifferent to the human need for order and meaning and justice... the unpredictable visitations by disease and death, the transitoriness of fame, the treason by friends and kin. He is the god of machines and power, of despotism and conquest, of pieces of brass and armoured plates.

Our Savage God

The Lord is in this place; how dreadful is this place,' says a traditional English air. The second-century Christian heretic Marcion (100-165 CE), observing the holy violence of the Hebrew God, pronounced him saevus - 'raving, savage, berserk'.

As you might expect from a raving savage, this God was not only 'vengeful' and 'atrocious', but inconsistent, full of contrary qualities, highly volatile and unstable. He was forever changing his mind, making laws only to announce later that he hated those who obey the very laws he has made. He... suddenly announces in a fit of rage: 'Your new moons and sabbaths and great days I cannot abide; your fasting and workless days and feast days my soul hateth', and... 'I hate, I have rejected, your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies'.¹⁶

God's justice is not justice at all by human standards. When Moses asked God 'Shew me now thy way', he got a surly reply: 'I will shew mercy on whom I shew mercy'.¹⁷ - that is, arbitrarily, and in the tone of 'Mind you own damn business'.

According to Jewish legend, Moses persisted in this pestering even in the afterlife. When Moses arrived in heaven, God showed him the great men of the future. Among them, Rabbi Akiba, the most illustrious intellect of the second century CE, was seen interpreting the law in a most wonderful way. Moses said to God: 'Thou hast shown me his worth; show me his reward.' Moses was



Gnostic belief was a powerful force in the second century of the Common Era and may have been formalized some centuries before that: scholars seem divided on the issue. Gnosticism solved the contradiction of a loving God who, as a logical consequence of being also the Creator, is the ultimate, and acquiescent, source of evil. The Gnostic solution lay in divorcing a higher, unknown, transcendent, true God from material creation, which is the work of the Demiurge, identified as the Biblical God. The material world came about as the result of a Fall, often said to be that of Lucifer from heaven. Thus the Semitic God is demonized, and in consequence the world and the flesh with it. However - and this is crucial to the American religion - humanity still partakes of the ultimate godhead, for the body imprisons a 'divine spark' that longs to escape the flesh and be reunited with its source.

These are the beliefs Harold Bloom is calling on when he says that Americans believe they are older than creation and the Edenic Fall, and in some sense equal to God. He notes (page 260) that in practice American religions are not, by and large, ostensibly dualistic in the sense of believing that either the world or the body is evil and is the work of the Devil (although one might find a mirror-image trace of this in the otherwise startling Mormon doctrine that God is a material person). Bloom identifies American dualism with a dualistic sense of self, part human and part potentially divine - 'the occult self, the [already] saved element in one's being, [which] goes back beyond nature to God, beyond the Creation to the Creator.'

That Creator is not the Gnostic Demiurge, but the usual suspect, the Semitic God. The Emersonian conviction that God is in a prelapsarian sense within us ties together the Edenic wilderness of America, the peculiar solitude of American communion ('American ecstasy is solitary, even when it requires the presence of others as audience for the self's glory' - page 264), and the emphasis on the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth in American derivations of Christianity, to make an unusually pregnant complex of mythic symbols. It certainly contains the potential to be expressed in other than 'theological' forms.

seething with boils, acknowledges that the Lord is the source of evil and misfortune, and rebukes his wife's despair and rage ('Curse God, and die') with the plain facts, which the poet-narrator openly endorses:

What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.
 ●13

Job's error is to imagine - to trust - that the horrors heaped upon him emanate from a divine sense of justice. His bewilderment lies precisely in not being able to comprehend what he has done wrong. But when he challenges God on this moral issue, the Lord angrily dismisses the question, and proceeds to expose himself as

then treated to the sight of Rabbi Akiba being exquisitely tortured to death [as he was, by the Romans, in 135 CE], and his flesh being sold by weight. Taken aback, Moses asked: 'Is this the reward of such a life?' And God answered: 'Be silent. This I have determined.'●18

All power resides in the Lord:

See now that... there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive: I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.●19

And this power includes the capacity for evil. He says unambiguously:

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.●20

Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?●21

Behold... do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil.●22

Christian Terrors

Christianity easily matches the excesses and caprices of the raving God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If you want it in full measure, I commend you to the Revelation of John the Divine. Jesus of Nazareth himself promised hell fire, outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth with the best. Upheaval and pain is not limited to the afterlife:

I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against the mother....●23

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his whole life also, he cannot be my disciple.●24

Entire cities attract his petulant wrath for failing to respond satisfactorily to his evangelism:

Woe unto thee Chorazin! Woe unto thee Bethsaida! ... And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say... it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.●25

Christians have no respite from the all-seeing eye of the omniscient Father, and will be judged accordingly:

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs on your head are numbered. ...every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.●26

Paul Tillich, who was probably the greatest Christian theologian of this century, addressed the sheer horror of living in the unwavering sight of the Lord:

Who can stand to be known so thoroughly even in the darkest corners of his soul? Who does not want to escape such a Witness? ...Who does not hate a companion who is always present on every road and in every place of rest? ... The final way of escape, the most intimate of all places, is held by God. ...God stands on each side of us, before us and behind us. There is no way out.●27

One thinks of the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'●28

In Christian belief, Jesus of Nazareth was the living God, made flesh. According to the Chalcedonian Definition of 451 CE, he is at once entirely human and entirely divine.●29 One of the most disquieting lessons of the Christian myth is that God habitually kills what he most loves. Most grotesquely, according to Pauline christology, he kills himself, in the flesh of Jesus, in order to save humanity from its fallen state and redeem it. But God loves and kills each of us, too; and none of us knows when the Reaper will call. The Talmud jokes



Gustav Doré's vision of the punishment meted out to seducers, pimps and panders, as described in Dante's *Inferno*. The scene, while strikingly reminiscent of the entertainments that took place nightly after 'lights-out' at the author's school, is an effective reminder of the spell cast on Christian thinking by the prospect of suffering and of the means whereby Christian lovingkindness was to be enforced.

about it: 'Repent the day before you die.'

For all our vaunted free will, God has absolute control over the spark of life within us. We are absolutely at his disposal.

Victims, Martyrs, Masochists

This eschatology, the consciousness of God's terrible qualities (including his love - that too must be unbearable), of one's own sinfulness, with the incessant calls for repentance, and the shining example of the Nazarene's agonizing martyrdom (whatever its salvific properties) - all these, I submit, can have a strangely crushing effect on the psyche.

The result is a psychopathology that promotes an ideal of the victim, longing to suffer pain, to confirm what he perceives as his own despicable vileness. Christianity ostensibly exalts personal salvation, liberation from the burden of original sin, and joy in the boundless love of the Lord: one is 'washed in the blood of the Lamb', in its own bizarre yet revealing imagery. And that image gives away the heart of the matter. I surely don't have to recite from Foxe's Book of Martyrs to prove that the Church heaps honors on its self-inflicted casualties - those who have loved Jesus and hated their own lives.

In Freudian terms, the underlying dynamic of this is masochism - a hopeless sense of individual worthlessness, shame, and a craving for the oblivion represented by union with the Christ, which can only be enjoyed in death. Thus Leonard Cohen pictures white smoke billowing up around Joan of Arc like a wedding gown:

18■ Cited in Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, Meridian 1958, page 118.

19■ Deuteronomy 32: 39-40.

20■ Isaiah 45:7.

21■ Amos 3:6.

22■ Micah 2:3.

23■ Matthew 10:34-5.

24■ Luke 14:26. See

below on the consequences of hating your 'own life also'.

25■ Matthew 11:21-24.

26■ Matthew 11:29-30;

12:36.

27■ Paul Tillich, 'The Escape From God', *The Shaking of the Foundations*, SCM Press 1949, pages 50-52. My italics.

28■ Hebrews 10:31.

29■ 'It lies beyond my meagre abilities as an interpreter of dogmatic theology to explain how it is possible for one person to be 100 per cent human and 100 per cent divine, without either interfering with the other... The orthodox believer learns more about what not to say than about how to talk about Jesus meaningfully.' - E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, Allen Lane 1993, page 134

30■ Leonard Cohen, *Joan of Arc, Stranger* Music Inc (BMI) 1987.

31■ Mary Douglas, *Purity And Danger*, (RKP 1966) Pelican edition 1970, page 17.

Anyone interested in attitudes to liminal places and conditions, 'boundary experiences' and the like, should read this marvelously humane book, deservedly a classic of anthropology, as much for its asides as for its central argument.

Djinns in plugholes would be impressed, probably, too.

32■ All translations are from N.J. Dawood (trans.), *The Koran*, Penguin 1964.

33■ Simon and Schuster (New York) 1992.

34■ See, for example, Peter Martyr, *Decades* (1555), in Edward Arber (ed), *The First Three English Books on America*, Birmingham 1855, in which (page 71) Martyr identifies the Indies with 'the goulden worlde of the which owld wryters speak so much'. And: 'Even as late as the last years of the sixteenth century, the Elizabethan poet Michael Drayton could write of Virginia as "Earth's onely Paradise".' - Walter Allen, *The Urgent West*, John Baker 1969, page 14. See also Chapter 1 of J.H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New*, Cambridge UP 1972, especially pages 24-5. Another late expression of this idea can also be found in Andrew Marvell's poem *Bermudas*.

She said 'I'm tired of the war
I want the kind of work I had before
A wedding dress or something white
To wear upon my swollen appetite'...
It was deep into his fiery heart
He took the dust of Joan of Arc
And high above the wedding guests
He hung the ashes of her lovely wedding dress●30

Self-punishment then becomes a key (personal, rather than communal) ritual. Following this psychological line, Catherine of Siena obliterated herself on one occasion, positively embracing the form evil had taken in her sight. In an 'exalted spirit', she felt revulsion from the wounds she was tending [and] bitterly reproached herself. Sound hygiene was incompatible with charity, so she deliberately drank off a bowl of pus.●31

This motif of calculated humiliation, self-abasement and degradation is one that we will meet again in the ufological context, if in less extreme form, in the second article in this series.

Under the Eye of Allah

To quote the Koran in this context may seem irrelevant and merely completist. Moslem nations are significantly not awash with claims of UFO activity, and countries that are contain only small, if often significant, Moslem communities - for example, there are 6 million Sunnis in the United States, the vast majority of whom adhere to the movement that initially followed the teaching of Wali Fard (brilliantly publicized in the 1960s by Malcolm X). But there is more to it than that.

It is not only reasonable - interesting, even - to point out the continuity of the attributes of Allah, ostensibly 'the merciful, the compassionate', with those of the God of the Tanach and the New Testament. It also gives backbone to the contention I shall promulgate in due course: that ufology arises only in certain social, psychological and perceptual religious climates, which for better or worse most Islamic nations have so far largely avoided. To strengthen this hypothesis, and let the reader assess it, it's only fair to offer some handle on Islam.

There are real distinctions between Allah and the Judaeo-Christian God, and perhaps the most striking is the lack of human free will and the powerful implication of predestination in the words that Allah dictated to his prophet. For examples:

A space of time is fixed for every nation. (sura 7)

Consider the fate of the evil-doers.

We made them leaders of unbelief. They called men to hell fire, but on the day of resurrection none shall help them. In this world We laid our curse on them, and on the day of resurrection We shall dishonour them. (sura 28)
...he whom Allah misleads shall have none to guide him. (sura 39)

A reader sensitive to the nature of the Semitic God might conclude that the doctrine of predestination, which indeed is embraced by the imams, is only a logical if dispiriting extension of the concept of a fate ordered by an omniscient, omnipotent Creator who is as much the source of evil as of good. That Allah is the supreme source of evil is not left open to doubt in the Koran. For examples:

'Because you have led me into sin,' said Satan, 'I will waylay your servants as they walk on your straight path....' (sura 7)
When you recite the Koran, We place between you and those who deny the life to come a hidden barrier. We cast a veil upon their hearts and make them hard of hearing, lest they understand it. (sura 17)

Allah is omniscient like the Judaeo-Christian God:

If three men talk in secret together, he [Allah] is their fourth. ... whether fewer or more, wherever they be, he is with them.(sura 58)

There is nothing in heaven and earth beyond the power of Allah. Mighty is he and all-knowing. (sura 35)

Allah's omnipotence is constantly expressed in terms of control:

We have told you that your Lord controls all men. (sura 17);
The night is another sign. From the night we lift the day....
The sun is not allowed to overtake the moon, nor does the night outpace the day. ... We gave them another sign when We carried their offspring in the laden Ark. ...We drown them if We will: none can help or rescue them, except through our mercy and unless We please to prolong their lives for a while. ...Glory be to him who has control of all things! (sura 36)

The note of exultant power and whimsical sadism here is found elsewhere in the Koran. There are even echoes, if less poetic ones, of the raving megalomaniac who confronted Job:

We created you: will you not believe then in Our power?
Behold the semen you discharge: did you create it, or We?
...Consider the seeds you sow. Is it you that give them growth or We?

...Consider the water which you drink. Was it you that poured it from the cloud or We? If We pleased We could turn it bitter. Why then do you not give thanks? (sura 56)

Do you not see how Allah drives the clouds, then gathers them and piles them up in masses which pour down torrents of rain? From heaven's mountains he sends down hail, pelting with it whom he will and turning it away from whom he pleases. The flash of his lightning almost snatches off men's eyes. ...Allah creates what he pleases. He has power over all things. (sura 24)●32

For those unimpressed - or whom Allah causes to be unimpressed - by all this, Hell of course awaits. Inmates will, it seems, be boiled as well as burned throughout eternity. Islam thus maintains the grand tradition of the absolutist, capricious, and savage God who revealed himself to the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets.

The Empty Cross

American Religion

I remarked earlier that the UFO syndrome is overwhelmingly an American phenomenon. To say it is derived from the USA is meant to be more than another way of stating the obvious - that most seminal UFO cases are American - and more than suggesting what is now less than a half-truth, that ufologists worldwide take their lead from US 'researchers'. I want to include the thought that where a fascination with UFOs is found, there you will find reflections and echoes of the American cultural condition. They may be imported (as, if only in part, in the UK) or they may be coincidental (as in Japan); they may be for many various causes indigenous. I will pursue this issue in the final part of this series.

For now, the logic of my argument runs: if the above is true, and if ufology is at heart a religious phenomenon, then the elements of any singularly American religious apprehension are bound to find their way into the UFO syndrome; and are therefore worth considering.

This isn't the place to review one of the most provocative analyses of the concepts buried in American religious life, Harold Bloom's *The American Religion*. ●33 Nor is there space to follow Bloom's route to his conclusions. But the neglected holy violence of the Semitic God - and his just, compassionate and tender qualities, which I felt did not need emphasis here - need

to be seen through the lens of the American religious perception.

Bloom concludes that 'the American sense of religion [is] almost wholly experiential'; the key experience is one in which 'the believer returns from the abyss of ecstasy with the self enhanced and otherness [i.e. a sense of community] devalued.' Bloom relates this solitary knowledge of God to the Gnostic belief that Creation and the Fall were simultaneous, but left behind a divine spark in Man:

Something in the American self is persuaded that it also preceded the created world. An abyss within the self finds itself at peace when it is alone with an abyss that preceded the world God made. The freedom assured by the American religion... is a solitude in which the inner loneliness is at home in an outer loneliness. (p31)

The American Eden

Pondering that passage, one thinks of Natty Bumppo, and of the long, insidious tradition of America as Eden: ●34 a garden in which one is alone, in all that endless wild space, with God, but most particularly with oneself - in 'the Freedom that is Wildness', as Bloom puts it (page 114). This national self-image lasted well into the 19th century, ●35 and in some sense still exists today in the belief that the United States is the land of opportunity - i.e. unfettered liberty, which as D.H. Lawrence knew is a species of solitude that borders on solipsism. And it survives in the powerful myth of the lonesome, drifting Western hero, who shares some characteristics with another quintessential American figure, Huck Finn - 'Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and civilize me, and I can't stand it.' As Bloom puts it (pages 63 and 65), in the great Revival at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in 1801, from which all home-grown American religions ultimately sprang,

...all the holy rolling was the outward mark of an inward grace that traumatically put away frontier loneliness and instead put on the doctrine of experience that exalted such loneliness into a being-alone-with-Jesus.

...Jesus is not so much an event in history for the American Religionist as he is a knower of the secrets of God who in return can be known by the individual.

The same mythos may also be spied feeding the rebellion of the American right-wing militias against 'big government'; Bloom several times expresses his gloom at the political implications of the foundations of the American Religion.

The vast American spaces are mirrored in 'a total inward solitude' that provides 'the freedom to know God' (page 32). The solitude is that of the desert, always the haunt of gods and their seekers, and is inimical to civilization. Bloom implicitly identifies the American religious experience with rebirth, through its concentration on the resurrected Christ (page 40):

American religion... is a severely internalized quest romance, in which some version of immortality serves as the object of desire. ... Catholics worship Christ crucified, but the Baptists salute the empty cross, from which Jesus already has arisen. Resurrection is the entire concern of the American Religion, which gets Christ off the cross as quickly as Milton removed him, in just a line and a half of *Paradise Lost*.

It is worth pointing here to the Mormon belief that it was during the 40 days after the resurrection that the Nazarene visited America. And, too, that the cross does not form part of Mormon iconography, while Joseph Smith proclaimed secretly that Mormons would become gods, and not, apparently, only in the afterlife; there is a tradition that he had himself crowned king of the

Kingdom of God. ●36 Mary Baker Eddy too, Bloom notes (page 134), had a secular (at least, mundane) and universal notion of resurrection. In her words: 'Resurrection from the dead (that is, belief in death) must come to all sooner or later.'

These themes, as well as the amazing Mrs Eddy, we shall meet again later. Bloom summarizes (page 103) the three fundamental principles of the American Religion as: the Gnostic notion that the soul predates Creation; the essential solitude of the experience of God or Jesus; and that faith is based on that direct experience ('knowledge'), not 'upon mere assent'.

What holds these principles together is the American persuasion, however muted or obscured, that we are mortal gods, destined to find ourselves again in worlds yet undiscovered.

And there, I suggest, is the significance of the empty cross to the American believer: it proclaims a transcendent rebirth to a nation already reborn into Eden.

The suffering of the crucified Christ is not uncommonly represented in vivid detail. The American religion departs even from European Protestantism in brushing aside the Agony to concentrate on the Resurrection. One wonders if contemplating the empty cross might not also raise the question of *whether anyone was there* - or, to put the same point in Californian New Age terms, whether Death is really necessary to an inhabitant of the American Eden.



One Nation Under God

Bloom leaves no doubt that the United States is what he calls a 'religion-mad' or 'religion-soaked' country. A 1989 Gallup poll found that 31 per cent of the American people believe they speak directly to God (page 53). Whatever they actually believe, 94 per cent of them wanted the Gallup pollsters to think they believe in God, 90 per cent pray, and 88 per cent believe that God loves them (page 37). Also in 1989, *Life* magazine reported that, according to another survey, 'over 70 per cent of the people in this country [i.e. Americans] now believe there is some evil spirit in the universe they call the devil, while there are less than 40 per cent who believe in a God.' ●37

These contradictory figures can be judged in the context of those given in the 1990 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, which 'reported a total of 145,383,738 members of religious groups in the US - 58.7 per cent of the population', a figure 1.1 per cent up on 1989. ●38 The largest single church is the Southern Baptist Convention, with 14,812,844 members

35 See Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, Harvard Univ. Press 1950, Chapter 11.

36 'Mormons are not monotheists, but they are Gnostic. In April 1844 Joseph Smith preached: 'God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret... I might with boldness proclaim from the house-tops that God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all. God himself could not create himself....' (Quoted in Bloom, op. cit., page 95.)

37 Cited in Rollo May, *The Cry for Myth*, Souvenir Press 1991, page 270 (footnote).

of religious groups in the US - 58.7 per cent of the population', a figure 1.1 per cent up on 1989.●38 The largest single church is the Southern Baptist Convention, with 14,812,844 members within the larger group of Baptist churches representing about 25,650,000 members.

Numbers and proportions like these mean that if Bloom's analysis is correct (and it is certainly very persuasive), then a huge proportion of the American people is, if not strict believers, certainly familiar with the essential concepts - the mythos - of the American Religion. Whichever figure for professed belief is more accurate, increasing secularization does not mean that the mythic underpinning of a belief vanishes with the profession of a specific faith. It will merely find new outward forms. As Hyam Maccoby says:

When a religion declines, its dogmas may decay rapidly, but its fantasies take much longer to disappear. ... The myth upon which a religion is based may be more deeply influential than its creeds. It is the myth that determines the temper of the culture to which the religion gives rise, and this temper may survive the death of belief in the creeds by many generations.●39

For ufologists, this means two things. It confirms the oft-repeated and almost universally ignored dictum that the background of claimants to close encounters of any kind must be exhaustively established if a complete evaluation of a case is to be possible. And it means, as a logical consequence, that something as ripe as the UFO experience for mythic development has to be considered in the light of the complex of Gnostic, syncretic, millenarian 'beliefs' that Bloom calls the American Religion. For it is clear that hardly anyone in the United States can have escaped them. They are part of the American Myth, and not that far removed from the American Dream. As Bloom remarks, 'since the American Religion was syncretic, from the start, it can establish itself within nearly any outward form.' The invasion of ufology by the worm of religion, and vice versa, is what I will consider next.

Footnote: Smelling as Sweet?

Self-aggrandisement through extravagant (almost fluorescent) titles of dubious provenance seems to be one of the signs of a false-Messiah pattern, especially on the ufological circuit.

The august founder of the Aetherius Society (page 3) has steadily progressed from a rumored \$10 Doctorate of Divinity through 'Sir', to a knighthood ('Sir'), followed by a countship and these days, one hears, likes to be known as a prince. One wonders why he hasn't taken the obvious step, and called himself simply 'The King' - surely no one is so disrespectful as to address him as mere 'George' these days, and he no doubt regards himself as worthier of the title than Elvis Presley.

Ruth Norman, leader of the Unarius cult, was known as Uriel, or Universal Radiant Infinite Eternal Light; she and her husband claimed to be (respectively) reincarnations of Mary Magdalen and Jesus of Nazareth. Over the years she adopted such titles as the Universal Seeress, Healing Archangel, Spirit of Beauty, Goddess of Love, and Cosmic Generator. Her more prosaic neighbors in El Cajon, California, were unimpressed, and referred to her simply as 'Spaceship Ruthie'.

[See John A. Saliba, 'Religious Dimensions of UFO Phenomena' in James R. Lewis (ed) *The Gods Have Landed*, State University of New York 1995, page 46 (this book contains an interesting profile of Norman's movement as a whole by Diana Tumminia and R. George Fitzpatrick); and Margaret Sachs, *UFO Encyclopedia*, Corgi 1980, page 222.]

NORTHERN ECHOES; continued from page 2

was unable to make a sound. I was then grabbed by small but unusually strong hands and grabbed into a compartment of the metallic object where the numbness left me along with my consciousness.

"When I came to I realised what had happened. I wore a helmet that fitted snugly atop my head and again I got the shock of my life. I found that the little men spoke to me mentally and in English. I was then told why I had been taken by those midgets whose appearance reminded me of [Disney's] seven dwarfs...

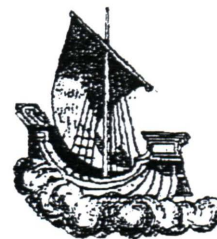
"You are going to the home of all men, Mars,' he told me, 'and you will undergo a change which will protect you from bodily harm, for as long as you shall have like and be useful to us...'

"I was then told to look out of a peep-hole slit which served as a porthole, only to see that the Earth had shrunk away to the size of an orange. It was then that panic overtook me.

"Again those little ones guessed what I was about to do [so] they pointed a little pencil-like affair at me and I immediately felt numb again, thus disabling me from striking down one or two of my captors."

This curious tale is from an 'allegorical story' in Robert Dickhoff's *Homecoming of the Martians*, an encyclopaedic work on flying saucers published in India in 1958. To add to the interest the whole bizarre book is full of references to abductions and spacenappings. Indeed, Dickhoff gave a lecture at the Steinway Hall, New York, called 'Martians Have Landed: Earthmen Disappear', and refers to an article 'Are Flying Saucers Kidnapping Humans' by Leroy Thorp, published in *Man to Man* magazine in October 1953.

Dickhoff, a self-proclaimed Buddhist monk, was later to write an even more bizarre work, *Behold the Venus Garuda*, self-published in 1968 about giant man-eating birds from flying saucers. One reviewer in a UFO magazine of the time complained that his copy of the book came as separate pages wrapped up in a cellophane shirt packet!



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38■ Quoted in *The World Almanack* 1991, Pharos Books (New York) 1990: see 'Religious Information', page 609.
39■ Op. cit., pages 127 and 165.
Maccoby here echoes an insight of Ernst Cassirer in *The Myth of the State*, that a nation's history is determined by its mythology; on the same theme Rollo May (op. cit., page 92) quotes Virgil: 'We make our destiny by our choice of gods.' Maccoby provides ample illustration of these truths in tracing post-Christian political and eventually genocidal anti-semitism back to its roots in the Judas myth of the early Christian (Pauline) church. He is also illuminating (pages 94-96) on the psychological contortions that Christianity demands of its unfortunate adherents in accommodating the doctrine of the Nazarene's salvific martyrdom, and devastating in his comparison of the parallel legends concerning the childhoods of Judas, Moses and Oedipus (pages 102-107). This last will be treated in Part II of this series.

GILL again

Martin Kottmeyer

IN A 1979 survey of ninety leading ufologists, Ron Story found the case of Father Gill of Papua New Guinea was most mentioned when he asked for the strongest UFO evidence. ●1 Jerry Clark had acclaimed it as "History's Best Case" in an article for *Fate* magazine the year before. ●2 J. Allen Hynek termed it a "classic" and said he was impressed by the quality and number of witnesses and the character and demeanour of Reverend Gill. ●3 In *The UFO Experience* he gave it the highest probability rating among the close encounters of the third kind. ●4 Jacques Vallée thought it "one of the great classics in UFO history". ●5 The Lorenzens include an assessment of it by one of their APRO representatives as "one of the most important ever recorded" in their *Flying Saucers: The Startling Evidence of the Invasion from Outer Space*. ●6

It wasn't hyperbole. There are 38 witnesses. No other entity case comes close to that number. Twenty-five signed their names to a detailed report. Five of them were teachers and three were medical assistants. There was agreement the object was circular, had a wide base, a narrow upper deck, a type of legs, four human figures, and a shaft of blue light which shone upwards into the sky at an angle of 45°. It was visible for hours. The Australian Air Force, while able to explain away some details of the case as astronomical bodies, confessed they could reach no definite conclusions and granted the seeming presence of "a major light source of unknown origin". ●7 Sceptics, including Donald Menzel, Daniel Cohen and Phil Klass, have not fared well in their criticisms of the case. ●8 Gill answered the major charges convincingly when he was interviewed by Hynek. There's been no confession or revelations pointing to a solution. While we don't hear it mentioned much these days amid the din of things like Roswell and the Greys, it is not because of any resolution of the puzzle or the discovery of stronger evidence for UFOs. It's still an impressive anomaly.

It of course isn't impressive enough to make me

believe in visiting extraterrestrials. Indeed the high point of the case highlights one of the core paradoxes of the UFO phenomenon. The figures on the deck waved back at the witnesses on the beach leading them to think it would soon land. Yet it didn't. Why no contact, given this seeming friendliness? The case invites question after question about it that seem to cast doubts on a veridical extraterrestrial interpretation. Of all the places in the world to reveal themselves to this maximal extent, why Papua New Guinea? Why 1959 and never again? Why did it float about in the air for hours, slowly drifting, especially when most saucers of that era went blazing about at great speeds? Why do the drawings show a UFO much thicker than most of the saucers of that era? Why are the figures walking about on top of it; something we don't see much of in reports nowadays? Why are the figures so human-looking; so unlike contemporary Greys? Guyorobo's drawing shows branching legs that seem unlike anything else in the UFO literature, why? What is with that 45° shaft of blue light? Why is it pointed up instead of down as they usually are in cases with light beams? If it is a laser, as some suggest, what is it firing at, illuminating, or connecting? The case is so singular, one wonders if it even belongs with the rest of the UFO phenomenon.

Yet what is the alternative? Klass suggested it was a hoax. ●9 This has its difficulties. Gill was an ordained Anglican priest. Even granting religious authority has lost some of its lustre in recent years in the wake of televangelism scandals, this is still a good mark in the case's behalf. The involvement of five teachers similarly suggests a group of people likely to have a higher moral standard than average. The story told by Gill is oddly banal set next to most of the hoaxes in UFO history. The figures on deck seem only to be working and their interaction with the witnesses is limited to waving. There is no dramatic conflict, no sense of danger, no sense of horror, no indications of cheekiness. Gill's field notes have an authentically clip-

1. STORY, Ronald D., *UFOs and the Limits of Science*, Wm. Morrow, 1981, p. 23

2. CLARK, Jerome, "Close Encounters: History's Best Case", *Fate*, February 1978, pp. 38-46

3. HYNEK, J. Allen, *The UFO Experience*, Ballantine, 1972, pp. 167-172, 270. HYNEK, J. Allen, *Hynek UFO Report*, Dell, 1977, pp. 216-223

4. *The UFO Experience*, *op. cit.*, p. 270

5. VALLEE, Jacques, *UFOs in Space*, Ballantine, 1977, pp. 156-159

6. LORENZEN, Coral and Jim, *Flying Saucers: The Startling Evidence of the Invasion from Outer Space*, Signet, 1966, pp. 175-178

7. HYNEK, 1977, *op. cit.*, p. 217

8. CLARK, *Ibid.* HENDRY, Allan, "Papua/Father Gill Revisited", *IJR*, 2, #11, November 1977, pp. 4-7 and December 1977, pp. 4-7

9. KLASS, Phil, *UFOs Explained*, Vintage, 1976, pp. 277-289



15. CAMPBELL,
Steuart, *The UFO*
Mystery - Solved,
Explicit, 1994, pp.
66-67

I suspect most ufologists might accept that one person alone could hallucinate seeing a group of people

Table

Venus	R.A. 9h 29.5m	Dec. 16° 23'	Mag. -4.3
Boianai	149° 53' East	10° 01' South	
Giwa	149° 48' East	9° 47' South	

inside or on a flying saucer, but not two. Having 25 people sign a report claiming they saw this and having them agree this is what they saw in the follow up is totally without parallel in the literature and without clear precedent in either abnormal psychology or Fortean history. It might be possible; perhaps they all drank from a keg of something spiked with an hallucinogen and Gill became accidental guide, but it hardly seems probable. This approach seemed as clearly counter-indicated as the hoax and ETH ideas. In saying "BUT NOTHING ELSE", Hendry seemed to close the book on the case and it would be hard to deny that assessment was completely fair. No other alternative was obvious. I can't say it troubled me much. Unexplained means unexplained. It happens sometimes.

Last year I read a couple of papers by Paul Rydeen which compared UFO belief to cargo cults. ●16 I'd seen the idea before, but they put me in the mood to acquire Lamont Linndstrom's new treatise *Cargo Cult* to see if it might be a fruitful subject to explore. It was, but in a way I didn't count on. Papua was where cargo cults first sprung up. Cargo cult belief involved the expectation that ships sent by one's ancestors would some day arrive bearing cargo that would make them as wealthy as European colonisers. The Europeans perpetually spoke of cargo shipments from their distant home that were running late. World War Two escalated and shifted cargo expectations because of the immense sea and air traffic involving American shipments of troop supplies. GIs had spread the wealth around during their stay. Cargo rituals soon involved planes, airstrips, control towers, and radios. Could this milieu have been involved in the Gill case?

Gill said there was initially no thought that the sightings involved extraterrestrials. It was felt to be "a strange new device of you Americans". Critics tried to paint Gill as a believer because the phrase Mothership was current in UFO lore, but the phrase is older than that and was used as a term denoting the boat in a fishing fleet to which the catches of smaller boats were centrally relayed. The original field notes confirm Gill thought the figures were "human". Besides their friendly demeanour, indicated by their waving at the witnesses, the activities of the figures resemble the normal work you would see on a ship deck. Drawings and verbal descriptions include the presence of portholes and railings like you'd see on a ship. Was this all some kind

of Cargo vision?

The emotions seemed suggestive:

We all thought it was going to land. We were hoping it was going to land. We were in a state of what you might call anticipation. They came down and then they seemed to stop.. And spontaneously, almost, we started to wave, just as though - we're used to waving at people, boats are coming in all the time, small craft, and naturally we're used to waving at people on these craft...To our surprise and we really were surprised, these people waved back. ●17

This is consonant with the sentiments of cargo expectations, but it is rather explicitly normal everyday behaviour as well. It's hardly proof.

There are also blatant difficulties. Why should an Anglican priest get caught up in the enthusiasms of Papuan religiosity? A missionary ought to be immune to some degree to the influence of a competing faith. One could perhaps wave this off with appeals to empathy in Gill. Turn around the charge that the natives would be pliant to his will and say he was pliant to their charms and mass psychology.

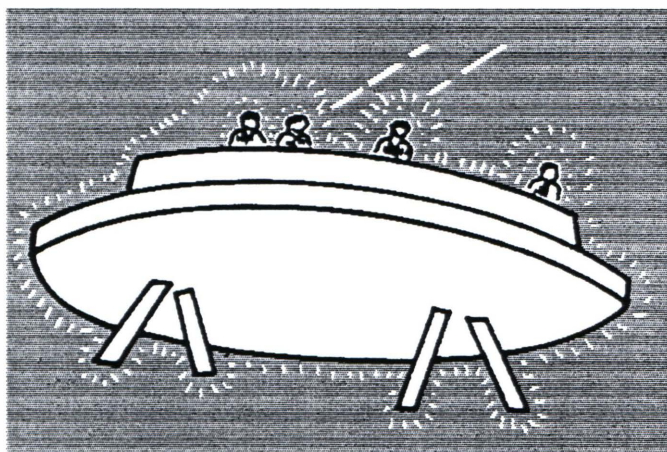
More troubling is the objection that Papuan expectations should have yielded an image more consonant with American aircraft. Aircraft don't have deckhands roaming about topside. They don't have

railings. Where are the wings and tail section? Why is there this confusing mix of sea vessel and hovering aerial platform? Aerial platforms, moreover, were pretty much a theoretical fancy back then with a doubtful history in experimental trials. About the only source of the image in mass culture worth mentioning was the old *Johnny Quest* cartoon series and that came after the Gill case not before.

Then another oddity -

Stan Seers reports a discussion he had with Gill about the shaft of light that emanated from the top of the craft. Gill "emphasised it was pencil thin and parallel, that is to say it did not spread, or increase in diameter as does an ordinary beam of light." ●18 Seers, writing in 1983, identifies this as a laser, which in 1959 was terrestrially unknown. Must be *extra-terrestrial*! He forgets, however, that laser light normally isn't visible from the side without something to disperse it like particles or fog. It dawned on me then that this could make sense in the context of the other ship motifs. The 45° lines of light in the drawings of Gill, Stephen Gill Moi, and Ananias Rarata would simply be ship's rigging, brightly illuminated. Yet that's paradoxical if we are dealing with visionary construction of the image. Gill shouldn't have been puzzled - it should be self-explanatory. Looking at the drawings again, Guyorobo's branching legs suddenly made sense to me as also ship-related. they were fishing nets dropped into the water. But, same paradox, why wasn't it self-explanatory if it was part of a vision? Solution: Forget about visions - this is a real boat!

But, that can't be right. These drawings don't look like the Flying Dutchman. Fishing boats don't fly. Magonians are obliged to grant the idea of ships floating

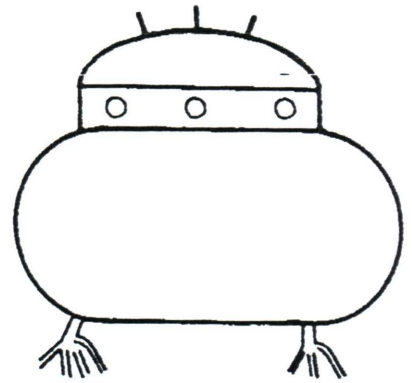
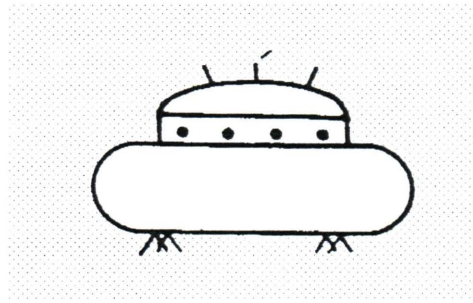
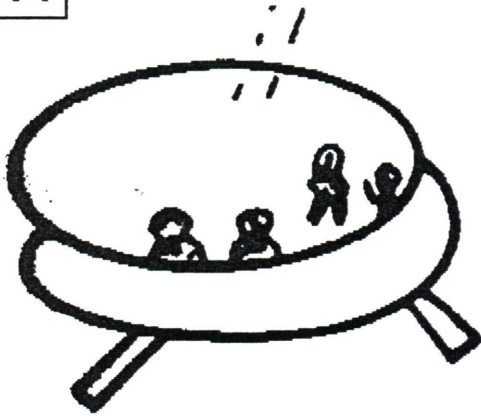


Drawing based on Fr. Gill's description.

18. RYDEEN, Paul, "Cargo of the Gods", *Anomalist*, #1 (Summer 1994), pp. 83-88. RYDEEN, Paul, "UFOs and the Cult of Cargo", *Strange Magazine*, #9, (Spring-Summer 1992), pp. 6-9, 52-53

17. BASTERFIELD, *op. cit.*, p. 26

18. SEERS, *op. cit.*, p. 36



Sketch of the Gill UFO by Stephen Gill Moi (left), Ananias Rarata (above), and Dulcie Guyorobo (right).

19. CORLISS, William, *Rare Haloes, Mirages, Anomalous Rainbows and Related Electromagnetic Phenomena*, Sourcebook, 1984, and chapters in the Condon report

20. SHEAFFER, Robert, *The UFO Verdict*, Prometheus, 1981, p. 216

in the air is centuries old. Theorists in the field of meteorological optics have noted that the illusion of ships floating in the air is sometimes created by mirages. They are formed by light being bent and distorted in sea air which has stratified into layers of differing temperatures and thus differing refractive indices. Could that be the case here? I thought so for a while, but I bounced the idea off someone more knowledgeable about meteorological optics and was flatly told it was impossible. The problem is with the figures on the deck. The ship would have to be miles away over the horizon for the illusion to work and at that distance the figures could not be optically resolved. To the suggestion I made that mirages magnify images at times, he countered that mirages only stretch images in the vertical dimension. Looking at various drawings of mirage apparitions in the literature, it was clear this mechanism would not work. ●19

I put in some observing time at a nearby lake to doublecheck the limitations of visibility of humans on ships. For Gill to be able to observe humans waving at him, the ship definitely had to be well under a mile in distance. Forget mirages.

One of the days I picked for observing involved very calm conditions. The sailboats crept very slowly across my field of vision. The surface was close to mirror-like. The ship hulls doubled. The sails only partly doubled. This I expected and felt would explain the thickness of the saucers drawn by Guyorobo and Rarata. The sky's blueness was mirrored in the water and I noticed the horizon was virtually invisible, so well did the colours match and nearly blend. At night, one could imagine the horizon completely lost. I also observed on this occasion discontinuities in the water that ran at a mostly horizontal angle to the real horizon. They were undoubtedly related to a slight wind. Some ran across the field of vision between me and a sailboat. One of these discontinuities was fairly close to the shore and seemed rather stable over the period of observation of roughly an hour. I am unaware of the precise reason for this stability - if it involved a miniature sea-breeze effect, water currents, or whatever. Move this into the night, illuminate it by boat light, and one might get the effect of a false horizon. We do know that there is a type of night fishing that takes place in Pacific regions. Squid fishermen rig their boats with powerful incandescent lamps of many thousands of watts to lure squid up from great depths. ●20 Such a boat could account for the observation "It was sending a bright white halo - throwing it up on the base of the cloud". That's hardly typical of Venus! Such a fishing vessel would also

account for the slow drifting motion of the object and its long presence in the area. Other types of boats would have traversed such an area in a much briefer period of time.

We have here, I think, most of the elements needed for an acceptably unparadoxical resolution to the Gill classic. It is basically a real-world example of one of those double-interpretation perceptual puzzles. Look at a drawing one way, you see a duck; look at it a different way and you see a rabbit. Look at the Gill saucer one way and you see a hovering saucer decked out in lasers, landing legs and windows. Look at it a different way and you see a brilliantly lit squid-boat with rigging, fishing nets draped in the water, portholes, and men too busy to do more than wave at the natives they see onshore. Nobody is hallucinating or lying or behaving stupidly. The situation simply invites two interpretations and Gill's party locked into the wrong one, tricked by a false horizon which led them to think the image was hanging in the air.

Can we be certain this is what really happened? There are still things we might feel uneasy about. Could dozens of people really be fooled this way for hours without somebody on site tricking out the correct answer? How likely is it that squid-boats visit the region so rarely that Gill and everyone else never were able to put two and two together on a later occasion, like when wind conditions were different? Though I consider these unanswerable, my retort must be. "Well, do you have a better solution?" Hoaxes, Venus-induced hallucinations, and extraterrestrials seem a good deal harder to swallow than this scenario.

That this is a disappointingly unrevolutionary solution, I fully concede. It is also rather boring from a psycho-social perspective. My hope that Cargo belief would provide a key to the case was thoroughly dashed in the end. I almost feel obliged to apologise for what feels more like tying up an old loose end than the offering of useful insights into the nature of the UFO phenomenon. Still, it was history's best close encounter. Excelsior, I suppose. ●●●

Editor's Query: We know that a number of members of the family of the noted English sculptor, wood-engraver and typographer Eric Gill - the creator of the famous 'Gill Sans' typeface - were Anglican missionaries. Do any of our readers know if Fr. Gill was a member of this family? J.R.

book reviews

Reviews by Peter Rogerson, except where stated.

James R. Lewis (editor). *The Gods Have Landed; new religions from other worlds*. State University of New York Press, 1995. £16.95

As readers of my piece in *Magonia* 53 (and Peter Brooksmith's piece in this issue) will have seen there is a very strong religious component in contemporary ufology, and one which goes back far into the contactee movement. This should provide excellent ground for the study of new religious movements and responses. Yet, like so many academic anthologies, this one is curiously disappointing. There is one good, relevant paper: 'Religious dimensions of the UFO abductee experience', by John Whitmore which explores abductions as encounters with the 'Other', and suggests that the largely US locus of abduction stories reflects the American interest in the 'Captivity Narrative', in which a usually female, pure American is captured by the 'terrible other', such as 'Red Indians', Barbary pirates, priests, white-slavers or Communists. Then to be subjected to torture and degradation, eventually to be rescued by all-American super-heroes. In modern narratives this is the hypnotist-researcher - Budd Hopkins as a psychological Rambo, there's a thought for you! One could perhaps say the same about Satanic abuse narratives in which innocent children are rescued from the 'terrible other' by heroic social workers.

Other papers are less useful. There are studies of Raelianism and the Bo-Peep cult, but the latter is now a 20-year old story which the investigators are still trading on, Raelianism has, unlike Adamski or even the Atherious Society, made little impact on ufology or the wider folk culture.

A couple of pieces by John Saliba are straightforward literature reviews, in one of which he fails to separate ufology and mainstream exobiology, despite the fact that most exobiologists despise ufology.

Given his long background in the subject even J. Gordon Melton's contribution, 'The contactees; a survey' is rather disappointing, despite a promising beginning, including a reference to possibly the first abductee Willard Magoch who claimed to have been taken to Mars by an unknown force in the early years of this century. The article however peters out as though Melton had run out of time and had to hastily finish for a deadline.

A redeeming feature is an impressive bibliography of contactee literature by Melton and George Eberhardt.

□□□□□

James McClenon. *Wondrous Events: foundations of religious belief*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995. £17.95

An important cross-cultural study of how anomalous experiences influence the development of folk beliefs and religious ideologies. The events studies include ESP,

ghosts and hauntings, near-death experiences and the role of the charismatic shaman or psychic. Psychical research is also examined.

McClenon's position is a sort of halfway-house between anthropologist and parapsychologist, conducting field studies, investigating cases and collecting narratives. There is much fascinating material in this recommended book

□□□□

C. D. B. Bryan. *Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind; alien abductions and UFOs, witnesses and scientists report*.

Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1995. £20.00

The author, son of Col. Joseph Bryan of NICAP, gives an insightful account of the abduction experience, firstly through an account of the June 1992 MIT abduction conference, and secondly through post-conference interviews with some of the participants, and through following Budd Hopkins's regressions of a couple of abductees, 'Alice' and 'Carol'.

The conference that emerges from this account is hauntingly familiar to anyone who has attended other UFO events. It is as hybrid as anything found on board a flying saucer: combining a scientific conference with a freak show and a revivalist meeting. Speakers range from the sensible to the screwy, with the latter being over-represented in the audience. As Peter Brooksmith remarked in *Fortean Times* what were lacking were real sceptics. No-one more sceptical than Jenny Randles was permitted to be heard, and with the works of David Jacobs and Eddie Bullard being set as pre-conference reading it was clear that the standard U.S. abduction model was to be taken for granted.



In the event what really divided the conference was the growing split between those abductionists who see the abductors as nuts and bolts, flesh and blood aliens performing hideous scientific experiments; and the Big Macks who portray the abductors as spiritual fairies bringing enlightenment. Mack has established the blancmange tendency: "I'm not saying they are physically real, but I'm not saying they're not, that's not a valid dichotomy". But one still wants to ask him: if I had a video-recorder running when Mrs Figgis was being abducted through a solid wall, would it record her going through the wall, or lying asleep in her bed?

In many respects the rise of Mack, Carpenter and Nyman marks a rejection of the revived ETH ufology of the eighties. Also disappearing fast is any distinction between abductee and contactee as insisted upon by Bullard and others, with abductees changing their name to 'Star', becoming 'healers' crystal gazers, etc.

What emerges from the long extracts Bryan gives from Hopkins interviews with witnesses is just how callous and manipulative Hopkins can be. Half the time he hardly listens to what the abductee is saying, and woe betide them if they stray from his pre-set agenda. Time after time he interrupts them to push them along the desired path. Eventually abductee 'Carol' begins to recall being abused at the age of about twelve by a 25-year old man. Bryan comments: "I am thinking, Jesus, what are we getting into here?" Out of your depth Budd, way, way out.

David Barclay. *Aliens, the final answer, a UFO cosmology.* Blandford, 1995. £9.99.

Having established yourself as the epitome of ufology's lunatic fringe how do you ensure your continued prominence there against stiff opposition? On a flash of inspiration you decide to write the stupidest UFO book ever. Easier said than done, for the competition is fierce. A good start is to argue that the ufonauts are supernatural intelligent dinosaurs, but the hack-pack are still at your heels. Saying that they come from the hollow-earth is a stroke of genius, and you've clearly put space between yourself and the others, but any trace of literary ability and they could still trip you up before the post. But adopting the style of pig-ignorant and proud of it pub-bore, dragging in semi-coherent backyard theology, charging blindly ahead and lashing out at Darwin on one side and the Pope on the other, brings you safely home the winner. You've done it, created the ideal pot-pourri of the worst features of every god-awful UFO book ever written. Was it worth it?

Rupert Sheldrake. *Seven Experiments that Could change the World; a do-it-yourself guide to revolutionary science.* Fourth Estate, 1995, £6.99

Sheldrake explores a variety of possibly anomalous effects, such as homing pets and pigeons, termite nests, the sense of being stared at, phantom limbs, variability of physical constants and experimenter effects, and suggests possible experiments to test for them. It is a pity that many of them are beyond the school science laboratory, as they would make interesting and instructive alternatives to boring yesterday's science, which is the staple fare of school science. I doubt is any of them would demolish accepted paradigms, but at least it would be fun finding out!

Leah Haley. *Lost was the Key.* Greenleaf Publications, 1993. £16.99

Another abduction book in which dreams and deep paralysis experiences become interpreted as abductions, leading to more dreams, as a vicious circle develops. In Ms. Haley's case these included dreams involving government agents, resulting in a rapid descent into a paranoid world in which the government is spying on her and even plotting to kill her. One can see in all this the paranoid attitudes which fuel the militias.

Ken Rogers. *The Warminster Triangle.* Coates and Parker, 1994. £11.99.

This is basically a condensation of Arthur Shuttlewood's early books, but omitting such episodes as the telephone calls from the Aenstrians. Presumably by now the Warminster watchers have discovered the identities of the hoaxers but are still too ashamed to admit how they were fooled.

Speaking of hoaxes this book actually mentions the famous David Simpson hoax photograph, first revealed as such in *Magonia's* fore-runner MUFOB twenty years ago. Curiously, however, it does not actually mention that it was a hoax. Presumably news travels slowly in deepest Wiltshire.

Of course, for many *Magonia* readers Warminster is ancient history, but they might be interested in the sorts of things that interested the previous generation of ufologists. Old-timers can just wallow in nostalgia.



Ken Rogers' nostalgic round-up of Warminster UFO lore recalls the heyday of Arthur Shuttlewood (above).

W. A. Harbinson. *Projekt UFO: the case for man-made flying saucers.* Boxtree, 1995. £16.99

Well, you see, Adolf Hitler and the Nazis escaped and ensconced themselves at the South Pole where they have built amazing flying saucers, and crewed them with equally amazing cyborgs. Governments know all about this and are keeping quiet about it. Exactly why these Nazis fly around the world on sightseeing trips rather than try to conquer it, and why world governments haven't nuked the Nazis isn't explained - presumably not just because the Antarctic is a nuclear-free zone?

We also get hints that the Americans, Russians, Canadians and British are in on the act. Again, no explanation as to why anybody would spend huge sums of money on a technology put to no useful purpose. The only interesting thing about Harbinson's

absurd thesis is that some ufologists who should know better seem to take him at least half seriously.

David Weeks and James Joyce. *Eccentrics.* Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1995, £17.99.

This is the second book produced by Weeks and his co-workers in their pioneering study of the psychology of eccentricity. Many of the people featured in this volume will be types familiar to ufologists, both as witnesses and colleagues. While Weeks and James are in many cases very indulgent towards their subjects (taking as 'eccentric' behaviour which in some cases is highly pathological) their judgement of the paranormal is ridiculously harsh, labelling people eccentric on the evidence of isolated mystical or near-death experiences. Nevertheless, it is an interesting study

Kevin D. Randle. *A History of UFO Crashes*. Avon, 1995.

£5.50

Kevin D. Randle. *Roswell UFO Crash Update: exposing the military cover-up of the century*. Global

Communication, 1995. £8.99

In addition to Roswell, in these books Randle examines four other crash-retrieval cases (Kingman, 1953; Ubatuba, 1957; Las Vegas, 1962, and Kecksburg, 1965) in detail and provides a long catalogue of other cases, many of them ending with insufficient information. While Randle gives the impression of thoroughness, there are times when we are able to see what 'evidence' actually means to him. Take the story of Mrs Judy Woolcott, who was interviewed by Don Schmitt "in connection with abduction research". In what connection was Mrs Woolcott an abductee? At least twenty years ago in 1965 her former husband had sent her a letter from Vietnam, just before he died, containing not the expected declarations of undying love, etc., but a long account of a crashed flying saucer twelve years earlier in 1953. Needless to say the letter is now lost. This is claimed as confirmatory evidence of a case already in print. You and I might think that Mrs W, read the story and made up hers to fit. This solution never seems to occur to Randle.

Twenty years ago scientific ufologists like Britain's Stephen Smith were talking about rapid response teams, and how cases even a week old were beyond proper investigation, yet now we have tales based on memories up to half a century old being taken at face-value. As an example Randles (J) points out that some of the descriptions of Roswell are similar to those reported in the Scully hoax, and asks could Roswell have influenced Newton and the Scully hoaxers. But surely it is equally, or more, likely that memories of Roswell were contaminated by details recalled from the best-selling Scully book (or even that Marcel, nursing a grievance after having been made to look a fool at Roswell, made up parts of the story for the benefit of later investigators in an attempt to re-write his role).

The ultimate problem with any crash-retrieval story is that there is no point in a cover-up. For all anyone knew, within days of Roswell a flying saucer could have landed on the White House lawn to demand the alien's wreckage back. Conspiracies only work if you are in control of the situation, and if Roswell had been real it would have been the aliens who were in control. Thus it seems that Roswell conspiratorialists are almost *forced* into the position of arguing

that the authorities are actually in collaboration with the aliens. It can be argued that cover-up is a natural military response, but if Roswell was a crashed space-craft all decisions would have been taken at Presidential level. Would a succession of Chief Executives and other political leaders have continuously kept the secret and never been tempted to break ranks, even at the height of the Cold War? If the politicians *knew* there were spaceships, would they have undertaken an ongoing programme of repression and ridicule as alleged, whilst realising that the whole thing could blow up in their faces?

There is no reason to believe such a conspiracy would have stayed secret for long. The Allied invasion of Europe in 1944, in which the lives of hundreds of thousands on troops were at risk was so leaky that several of the code-words ended up in a newspaper crossword. Does anyone really believe that the Manhattan Project was a secret? Of course, journalists did not write about it for patriotic reasons and because of wartime controls, but you can be sure they *knew*.

Is there any evidence of large numbers of scientists being diverted from their regular research onto a secret Roswell project, that they 'disappeared' for years and stopped publishing scientific papers? No, but it was just such a drying-up of published research in the Soviet Union that alerted the West to the Soviet's atomic weapon development.

Given that Roswell occurred during a veritable blizzard of flying saucer reports,

the response, had Roswell been a spacecraft, would not have been a silent 'wait and see', but would be to get the story out as soon as possible with your own spin on it before you were overtaken by events.

In its details, Roswell is inseparable from the whole of 1940's and 1950's ufology. If Roswell was a spacecraft then probably a proportion of the other UFO reports at the time were; yet the image of the flying saucers was based on the war. They may have been super-sophisticated technically, but they behaved like World War II fighters, bombers and reconnaissance aircraft, with the odd 'mothership' acting as a sort of aerial aircraft carrier. It is this cultural tracking which provides the final evidence that UFOs are not spacecraft: they are cultural images of spacecraft, and change as terrestrial technology changes.

There are many cultural anachronisms too in the Roswell story as promoted by Kevin Randle. In 1947 no black US soldier would have threatened a white civilian in the terms described. The lurid threats to keep quiet are a product of post-Assassination, post-Watergate cynicism; in the 1940's a quiet word in the ear about the patriotic duty of any good American would have done the trick just as effectively, and with less chance of unfortunate fallout.

Needless to say the USAF conclusion that the Roswell object was a Project Mogul balloon has gone over like, well, er, a lead balloon with Randle and company, but cynics might feel that they would automatically denounce *any* explanation other than extraterrestrial crashed saucers.

Four theories and a strange coincidence:

There are I think a number of possible areas of explanation for Roswell, here they are in decreasing order of likelihood and increasing order of interest:

■ The object was just a balloon, either a weather balloon, Project Mogul or something even more experimental. What is being covered up is the egg of the faces of the military who were not able to tell a balloon from a saucer.

■ The object was the top-secret, state-of-the-art device which was going to win the Cold War for the USA. Unfortunately it crashed on its first flight and any serious investigation would reveal that it was a hopeless non-starter and only went ahead because of a network of pork-barrel deals, corrupt Government contracts, and back-handers.

■ Maybe there really is a very dark and sinister Roswell secret such as a tethered balloon carrying a nuclear device set to explode at altitude. It broke free, depositing its lethal cargo near Roswell, the town avoiding incineration by a hairsbreadth. That is the kind of event which some people would go to any lengths to hide, even by creating elaborate UFO contact stories as the investigators come sniffing around.

■ Finally, assuming everyone is telling the truth at Roswell we might have evidence not of an ET crash

but of a charade to convince them that such a thing had occurred. A conspiracy not to suppress the ETH but to promote it.

There is a very curious piece of evidence which might be relevant. In the year following Roswell a British writer named Bernard Newman published a book called *Flying Saucer*, the plot of which concerned a group of scientists hoaxing a flying saucer crash as part of a plan to force world disarmament. I never thought much of this until a couple of years ago I picked up another book by Newman in a second-hand bookshop. This was published in 1943 and gave detailed plans for the post-war reconstruction of Europe. It is clear from this book that Newman was someone close to those in power. In fact, as Roger Sandell has informed me, it is virtually certain that he was an intelligence agent.

So we have a book written by a member of the intelligence community close to the political milieu, introducing the idea of a UFO crash being faked to further a political agenda - this within a year of Roswell. Was *this* the leak, ignored and unrecognised by ufologist, a warning from MI6 that they knew what their 'American friends' were up to and did not approve?

Ken Anderson. *Hitler and the Occult*, Prometheus Books, 1995.

In the early nineteenth century the career of Napoleon was the subject of a number of legends of omens and the occults, one trace of which is the apocryphal but much re-printed *Napoleon's Book of Fate*. In the twentieth century the career of Hitler has been the subject of similar tales. (In each case the fondness of occult believers for these tales is curious since the fate of neither leader is an impressive advert for the value of occult powers.)

Ken Anderson's book examines several 'occult reich' type tales, especially those contained in Trevor Ravenscroft's *The Spear of Destiny*, and concludes that they have little factual basis. While some of this is interesting, the book is very seriously flawed. Although it is based almost entirely on secondary sources the author seems unaware of Nicholas Goiodrich Clarke's *the Occult Roots of Nazism*, the only serious historical study of this subject. He also seems to have found that the material he had on his theme was not long enough to make a book and so decided to pad it out with

speculations on not really related areas of Hitler's career, such as whether his fondness for opera was a sign of homosexuality. [Anderson's own knowledge of music may be judged by his apparent belief in the existence of an opera called *Die Lustiger Fledermaus*, the previously unknown *The Merry Bat*, presumably based on *Die Fledermaus* and *Die Lustige Witwe*, and written by either Franz Strauss or Richard Lehar! J.R.]

Worse still, especially in a book purporting to expose incorrect claims by others, is the author's low level of historical accuracy. Factual errors litter its pages, some as the such as placing Hamburg in Bavaria, and confusing the medieval Frederick Barbarossa with the eighteenth century Frederick the Great so elementary that one might have expected any reasonably vigilant sub-editor to pick them out.

Two chapters stand out in this respect. One, on the legend of the Spear of Longinus, said to have wounded Christ during the Crucifixion, states that St John's is the earliest gospel, and contains an eye-witness account of the Crucifixion. These are ideas accepted by no serious Biblical scholar (al-

though Enoch Powell has recently written a book supporting St John as the earliest gospel.

The chapter on Nostradamus and war propaganda describes him as a Christian convert to Judaism (he was the reverse), and refers to British Nostradamus commentator Erika Cheetham as an American. He also claims inaccurately that "Goebbels ordered the printing of forged Nostradamus prophecies" while ignoring interesting material such as the piece on Nostradamus in the German propaganda broadsheet designed to resemble a page of the *Evening Standard* dropped on London in 1940, and the book *Nostradamus and the Present War* from the same year. Although this was published in Stockholm, its pro-Nazi contents, the anonymity of its writer, and the dissemination of an English language version by pro-Nazi elements in the USA suggest the hand of the Reich Propaganda Ministry.

Prometheus Books specialises in sceptical works on controversial topics. Sub-standard stuff like this does scepticism no service, and merely demonstrates that believers have no monopoly on shoddiness and inaccuracy.

Roger Sandell

Letters

Dear John

I was astonished to read Jenny Randles' assertion in *Magonia* 52 that the editors of *Fortean Times* had made up a letter from her [FT 76:57]. Never in 22 years of publishing have we made up a letter in *FT*, though we have wielded the blue pencil ruthlessly. In this case sixty-nine words were extracted from over a thousand that Ms Randles had written to us. If she still insists that we made up the letter, the original can be located in the archives and a photocopy sent to anyone interested.

Yours Sincerely
Paul Sieveking,
London NW5



BACK ISSUES

Back issues of *Magonia* are selling as fast as we advertise them, and some issues are in short supply. We have copies available of the following numbers, which are all available for £1.50 each, including postage (overseas £2.00 or \$4.00). Highlights of each issue include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 25: Strange helicopters linked with UFOs; Earthlights debate - Devereux, Evans, Campbell; Ufology and statistics | 39: Eyes from Space, paranoid visions; Seeing Things; Satanism Update |
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meant to think, we are to indulge in the passive absorption of media images to pass the time and escape from the cruel realities of day-to-day life. The only response that is required is to keep viewing and buy the products advertised.

UFOs fit neatly into this scenario. In terms of the culture industry UFOs offer an entertaining sideshow. The cheap tabloids shamelessly exploit the popularity of such subjects and the broadsheets stay aloof. Criticism and analysis is at best ill-informed. This is especially true of the broadcast media which is more interested in debating whether 'they' are true or not. This constant emphasis on 'believers' and 'sceptics' misses the opportunity to look at a subject in a wider context.

The bottom line is that books, articles and programmes have to play to the believers; they are the ones who are willing to part with their cash. The sceptics can say that such material is rubbish but they are usually buried under the banner headlines and sensational snapshots of alien autopsies. The few facts that do exist are the cheese in a media game of cat and mouse.

The culture industry takes the UFO cases away from the ufologists and turns it into sophisticated forms of high action entertainment (*The X Files* is a good example of this phenomenon) or it dramatises the material, often with the help of ufologists in 'factual' programmes or films (e.g. *Communism, Fire in the Sky, Strange But True*).

Ufologists are more likely to 'investigate' cases that conform to those already defined by the culture industry and therefore have the potential for exploitation. In the rush for headlines any old rubbish will pass muster if it feeds the media with sensational copy and (preferably) pictures (the Roswell film footage spings immediately to mind). Indeed, many ufologists never publish any of their findings in any useful form, they are just publicity and/or money obsessed saucer chasers who enjoy playing with the media. Other characters are foolhardy enough to publish endless reports about their investigations which usually show how much they have distorted the facts to conform to their pre-fixed ideas. The whole subject is riddled with sad believers or cynical exploiters who justify their money-raking by saying that it will fund their more serious research endeavours.

The following statement, by Theodore Adorno is about astrology but it can equally be applied to ufology ●4:

While the naive persons who take more or less for granted what happens hardly ask the questions astrology pretends to answer and while really educated and intellectually fully developed persons would look through the fallacy of astrology, it is an ideal stimulus for

those who have started to reflect, who are dissatisfied with the veneer of mere existence and who are looking for a 'key', but who are at the same time incapable of the sustained intellectual effort required by theoretical insight and also lack the critical training without which it would be utterly futile to attempt to understand what is happening

This might seem unnecessarily harsh but with a subject like ufology we should be more critical of the evidence because it is so contentious. In reality the reverse seems to happen. You just tell a well-known ufologist that you have had an encounter similar to the one in their latest book, and next thing you know you are in their abductee support-group or documentary programme.

What happens when your cast-iron evidence is proven to be as watertight as the Titanic? Does it sink without trace? Well, there are several good strategies to cover this contingency: you can say that you are just presenting the facts in good faith and were not aware of any duplicity. Usually the faith in the reality of UFOs is unbroken because there are millions more cases out there that will provide the necessary proof. Another tactic is to say it's part of some plot to discredit yourself and the witness(es) and that it's all true, honest. You either believe or you don't, any evidence pro or con seems irrelevant, since there'll always be new twists to the UFO stories to titillate the public.

Andrew Britton makes this statement about contemporary cinema productions.

Entertainment tells us to forget our troubles and to get happy, but it also tells us that in order to do so we must agree deliberately to switch life off. ●5

This can be easily changed to state that 'UFO stories are there to forget our earthly troubles' in the sense that we are not expected to do anything about the troubles of the world because the UFO entities have absolute control over us and our governments. And Britton goes on to argue:

Entertainment asks us to believe that it is supremely wonderful, as it must do if its main claim to represent one of the capitalist system's rewards, one of the tokens of that system's superiority to other systems, is to carry weight.

By the same token UFOs are used by the culture industry to show that it is one with popular beliefs and it rewards us with wonderful visions of UFOs on our TV and cinema screens. In this sense Britton's statement that 'Entertainment helps one feel normal' is helpful with regard to UFO material, as it implies that you are not mad if you see, or believe in, UFOs.

The culture industry gobbles up UFO material that is shovelled into it by willing ufologists, then it is crapped all over us whether we like it or not. As such

the very spirit of wonder and defamiliarisation with the everyday that UFOs might inspire only serves to feed the dominant socio-economic structure. Ufology is a proto-religion or techno-religion that has sold its soul to commerce. UFO material can then be regarded as nothing more than a product to be consumed rather than as something to be analysed and studied.

At this stage it would be easy to invoke capitalism (which is at the root of the culture industry) as the nasty devil that has brought the Space Gods crashing down to earth. That is an easy line of thought but like most aspects of ufology things are more complicated and paradoxical. In our society we all need money and if research, or sightings of UFOs can generate it, that is obviously helpful to the people concerned. That doesn't mean to say the research or the sightings are invalid, though it does provide a powerful incentive for elaborating UFO cases for the sake of financial gain. This is obviously a greater motive in the USA that anywhere else (in Britain very little money is earned from Ufology - ask my bank manager for ample evidence of this).

A greater motive, I think, is that the investigator or witness has a strong belief that they want to promote to the world at large. The belief is that there is something beyond everyday reality but the problem is that the believer cannot quite put their concepts into an adequate structure. That's why most messages from the space visitors are garbled reflections of our own worldly concerns. In contrast, the scientific investigator believes they are presenting hard won facts to the scientific community when they wouldn't know 'science' from a plastig Trog. Indeed, I prefer the contactee-type cultists in the sense that they at least try to peddle some sort of message for the greater good, whereas the rest of the abduction industry tries to sell us the idea of nasty, merciless space beings, with all sorts of hidden agendas and preconceptions mixed-in for good measure.

The will-to-believe in visitors from beyond our everyday realm is strong but at the same time it takes us into the grip of the culture industry that firmly imprisons us in the everyday. The beings that pilot the flying saucers are as substantial as today's headlines.

■1 Britton, Andrew, 'Blissing Out: the politics of Reaganite entertainment', *Movie*, no.31/32, Winter 1986, p.11

■2 Kant, Immanuel, 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' in H. Reiss (ed.) in *Kant's Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1970, p.54

■3 Tester, Keith, *Media, Culture and Morality*, Routledge, 1994, p.49

■4 Adorno, Theodor, 'The Stars Look Down: the Los Angeles Times astrology column' *Telos* no.19, pp.87-88

■5 Britton, *Ibid*, p.

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COMMENTARY



Invasion of the Barbarian Monsters from Heaven and Hell

UFOs ARE the key to discovering Heaven and Hell. It is appropriate that our modern technological societies have incorporated the old Gods and religions into 'new' technological belief systems. Since the 1950's the question 'was God an astronaut' had been put forward and popularised. From there it didn't take a genius to equate reports of UFOs in our own time with The return of the Gods. The 'scientific' ufologists have usually wanted to ignore such elements, whereas from the very beginning, the beings encountered by the contactees are thinly disguised religious entities who make bland religious statements that will help 'save our planet'. Even those who have only seen lights in the sky have often reported numinous feelings that can easily lead to more complex encounters.

The mastery of space exploration and the culminating Space race quickly made us wonder if we were evolving into Gods ourselves. In Kubrik's *2001; a Space Odyssey* humanity's technology leads to evolutionary change. In TV's *Star Trek* we would become secular rulers of the universe (and spiritual leaders in *The Next Generation*). By the early 1970s people felt that poverty, famine and disaster could be eradicated if as much effort was put into these problems as into the Apollo moon project. the power of money, science, technology, indeed the whole military-industrial complex, also had its dark side that revealed how false these hopes were; that dark side was the Vietnam debacle. Watergate only emphasised that the forces of human government were conspiratorial and far from democratic.

It is no wonder that virtually all 1970s movies had to have gloomy down-beat endings. Nature and science seemed to conspire against civilization, the common person was trapped in a web of conflict and disaster. In the cinema the answer was to look at the skies. Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* showed the emptiness

and superficiality of suburban existence, which is contrasted with the power and majesty of the UFO craft and their benign, Gandhi-like occupants. At the same time *Star Wars* showed that life amongst the stars is adventurous and dangerous. Luke Skywalker, the main protagonist, has to learn the difference between good and evil. *Star Wars* clears the slate of modern-day anxieties and puts us in a period where there are obvious goodies and baddies - a concept that was to be Reagan's main inspiration. Andrew Britton puts it this way:

The Reaganite space and horror cycles... answer to one another. In the one case Good is affirmed through the spectacle of its robustness and its pre-given triumph, and in the other through the spectacle of its terrible vulnerability to appalling alien forces or the punishment of deviations from it. The banality of the films derives from the undialectical conception of Good and Evil, and the reduction to the level of routine of the contest between them...

This regeneration of belief in space exploration and contact with extraterrestrials is highly paradoxical since in reality the Space Race was the direct outcome of the Cold War and the race to develop ever-more powerful and sophisticated weapons of mass-destruction. The same can be said

of ufology in general; we believe in the absolute power of these spiritual saviours from the skies who treat us like easily duped children (or cattle) yet use vehicles that are always falling out of the skies. Our New Gods have feet of clay. Indeed, our ability to build space craft and atomic bombs seems like a route to understanding or at least invoking these Gods. We can learn from the New Gods who have perfected their technology without killing themselves off. Equally, we can learn from the gods who have ruined their own planet and plan to invade our blessed plot (as in Wells' *The War of the Worlds* or the 'factual' case of the Janos People).

Having lost faith in our own leaders the space visitors represent new leaders who can show us how to use advanced technology without destroying our planet. This blind belief in the space visitors reverts us to an immature level as defined by Immanuel Kant in his attempt to define 'What is Enlightenment'? He wrote: 'Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity... Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another.' ●2 By extension the belief in UFOs represents an immature view of the world which denies us the ability to resolve our own problems. In our increasingly compartmentalised and alienating societies we feel powerless to change things, its far better to leave it to the space people to save us. As Keith Tester notes ●3:

If enlightenment means making sense of the world for oneself, without a belief in ghosts in the machine, then the operation of the culture industry means that a belief in such ghosts increases.

His argument is that the culture industry (newspapers, TV, radio, films, books, etc.) has a tendency to be barbaric in a cultural and moral sense. The culture industry revels in rendering its audience to the level of immature imbeciles. We are not

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